

# THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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**FAST AND FEAST****THE EDITOR**

**I**T is now a year since the Holy Father published the Apostolic Constitution *Christus Dominus* modifying the legislation regarding the Eucharistic fast. He did so, as he said, in order to remove some of the difficulties, become more numerous of recent years, that prevent the faithful from receiving Holy Communion. For a year it has been possible for people unable to attend an early Mass to communicate at a later, after having taken liquid food to sustain them. The Pope had in mind, he tells us in the Constitution, not only priests with their laborious Sunday mornings, but the laity who have no early Mass available, workmen on night shifts, mothers of families, children on their way to school, as well as the sick unable to fast or needing medicine. All such people may now benefit by these regulations and share in the eucharistic meal to an extent that sheer physical barriers have prevented heretofore.

Yet the numbers of communicants at the later and often more frequented Masses seem during the year to have been unaffected. One diocesan bishop has urged the members of the St Vincent de Paul Society to communicate at the late Masses under these conditions in order to make the rest of the faithful more aware of the possibilities. For habit has unhappily turned the chief Sunday Mass—the High Mass with its full ceremonies and its chant—into a celebration in which the Communion of the faithful is virtually unknown. Converts who have been instructed in the power of love that is given in this Sacrament are often perplexed after their reception to find Sunday after Sunday that no one goes up to the Communon rails during the principal Mass. The habit has become ingrained over the centuries.

It has been said that very few indeed of the faithful have any idea of what *Christus Dominus* has offered them. It was explained to them when it first appeared. But the Mass is not a class and the congregation does not behave like a well-trained set of scholars, so that at the best of times a simple

announcement that the hour of Benediction has been slightly altered requires a dozen forceful repetitions from the pulpit before even half the flock has taken in the news. A complicated set of new regulations unclearly explained and even explained in quite different ways in different churches—perhaps three or four times at the most—has left little impression on the majority. To obviate this difficulty, Fr John C. Ford, s.j., published a few months ago in America a little handbook, *The New Eucharistic Legislation*,<sup>1</sup> in which he gives the Latin text with parallel English translation of *Christus Dominus* and of the subsequent instruction from the Holy Office, followed by a clear and practical commentary. This book, or one like it, is one that every priest should read, digest and act upon—it even includes a shorter and longer form for announcements from the parish pulpits. The author, as Archbishop Cushing says in his Foreword, 'has written an explanation that is clear, scholarly, conservative and practical'. He is also benign in that he insists that the 'impossibility' of fasting, or the 'difficulty' of observing the laws of the eucharistic fast, should be interpreted as 'a moderately grave inconvenience'.

This is not the place to enter into the details of the legislation—the book will be required for that. It may not, however, be out of place to insist once more on the need to reintegrate the Eucharist as the source of the life of the Spirit. The fact that so many people feel that Communion during a High Mass is distracting and that their own 'prayer life' can be led apart from this common meal indicates the lack of the sense of the Eucharist as effecting a common love, and an active and fervent common love which is the Christian life in its essence and its fullness. We have even forgotten the full significance of any eating together. We still have our 'parties' for birthdays and similar occasions, when we sit round a common table and eat the same food, slices from one great ham or a big fruity cake. The old and good instinct remains, but it is not often given an opportunity of exercise save perhaps in pleasant country public houses. Even in public houses the common talk is over a common cup, but without the common meat or loaf, and among a rather

<sup>1</sup> Published by P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 12 Barclay St, New York; price \$1.50.

exclusive set of men. The Holy Father points out in the Constitution that the fast was early introduced to break with the love feast of the old dispensation. It was necessary in those days when everybody was so drawn to 'love feasts' that the Supreme and Unique feast was in danger of being eclipsed by the others. But now the weekly or daily feast at the altar is in danger of another kind of eclipse because people do not know how to feast, nor look for its life-giving properties. The physical life is preserved by food, a biological process we think. The intellectual life is preserved by thought, reading and certain special types of lectures or conversations. And the spiritual life is preserved by the secret flow of divine grace, drawn off on occasion from some vast divine ocean by the channels called the sacraments, but definitely drawn off or drawn away into these hidden little pools in the centre of the soul. All three lives have been separated by the scientific view of things and turned thus almost into mechanical processes.

We have to realise once again the 'love feast' of the wedding breakfast or the birthday party, or indeed of the daily family dinner when bodies are nourished together with the same food and drink, minds by the happy flow of stories and lively conversation, and souls by the free flow of divine love, the charity that binds the assembly—bodies, souls, words, laughter, food and drink—in one single bond of life. Then we shall find the same reality, transposed and transformed, round the altar—words, conversation and song, food and drink—a gathering at first regretting that they have not been more together or that they have allowed themselves to drift apart from their host and their fellows (*the Confiteor* and *the Kyrie*), but concluding in the greatest and most joyful union that human heart can grope for. Until the people have all eaten together of the fruit of Mary's womb they will never be able to sing with really full voice and heart the chorus to the deacon's farewell refrain; the fire of love should be fanned by the *Deo gratias* so that the Eucharist may continue in the prayers and lives of all that assembly for the rest of the week.

The prayer, then, which is not born and nourished at the Common Table will never be more than half alive.

## ON THE USE OF THE JESUS PRAYER<sup>1</sup>

A MONK OF THE EASTERN CHURCH

**W**E must remember that by the term 'Jesus Prayer' the Byzantine East refers, loosely enough, to any invocation centring in the Saviour's name itself. This invocation has taken various forms depending on whether it was used by itself, or included in more or less developed formulas. Moreover, it is for the individual to decide on his special way of invoking the name. In the East it has tended to take definite shape in the phrase 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner', but this formula has not been, and is not, the only one. That is an authentic 'Jesus Prayer' in the Byzantine sense, which is a repeated invocation whose core and strength is the name of Jesus. One might say, for example, 'Jesus Christ', or 'Lord Jesus'. The oldest formula, the simplest, and in our view the easiest, is the word 'Jesus' used by itself. It is in this sense that we shall speak here of the 'Jesus Prayer'.

This kind of prayer can be spoken or merely thought. It lies on the borderline between vocal and mental prayer, and also between meditative and contemplative prayer. It can be practised always and everywhere; in church, in one's room, in the street, the office, the factory, etc. One can repeat the name as one walks. Beginners, however, will do well to induce a certain regularity in this practice and choose fixed times and solitary places. Nevertheless, a systematic training does not exclude at the same time the entirely spontaneous invocation of the name.

Before pronouncing the name of Jesus one should first try to recall oneself to a peaceful and recollected state, and then beg the help of the Holy Spirit by whom alone anyone

<sup>1</sup> The translator thanks the Benedictines of Chevetogne for permission to publish the following slightly abbreviated rendering of an article, written anonymously by a monk of the Eastern Church. The original appeared in French in *Irénikon*, Tome XXV, No. 4, 1952. To avoid any confusion, it should be said that this article was a résumé of a brochure *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus*, published by the Anglo-Orthodox Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius in 1950.

can call Jesus Lord (1 Cor. 12, 3). Any other preparation is superfluous. Just as to swim one must jump into the water, so one must, at one go, plunge into the name of Jesus. When the name has been pronounced once, with loving adoration, one has only to cleave to it, to adhere to it, to repeat it slowly, gently, peacefully. It would be a mistake to want to force the prayer, to raise the voice interiorly, to strive for intensity and emotion. When God manifested himself to the prophet Elias, it was not in the storm or the earthquake or the fire, but in the still, small voice that followed it (1 Kings 19). Little by little we must gather all our being about the name, and let it, like a drop of oil, sink and soak silently into our souls. In the actual invocation of the name it is not necessary to say it continuously. Once uttered, the name can be drawn out in moments of repose, of silence and purely inward attention: a bird does the same, alternating between flight and hovering. All tension, all hurry should be avoided. If fatigue is felt, one must break off the invocation and take it up again simply when one feels like it. The goal is not a consistent, literal repetition, but a sort of hiding and resting in the name of Jesus in one's heart: 'I sleep, but my heart watches' (Cant., 5, 2). One must also banish all spiritual sensuality, all striving after emotion. It is doubtless natural that we should hope to obtain results which are in some sort tangible, that we should wish at least to touch the hem of the Saviour's garment and never let him go unless he bless us; but let us not think that an hour during which we have called upon the name without feeling anything, remaining apparently cold and dry, has been an hour wasted and fruitless. The invocation which we thought was sterile will on the contrary be very acceptable to God because, if one may say so, unadulterated, pure of all preoccupation with spiritual delights, and reduced to an offering of the will alone. Besides, in his gracious loving-kindness the Saviour often surrounds his name with an atmosphere of joy, of warmth and light: 'Thy name is an ointment poured forth. . . Draw me' (Cant., 1, 3-4).

For some, the invocation of the name will be an incident on their spiritual journey; for others it will be more than a phase, it will, without becoming *the* method, be one of the

methods they habitually use; for yet others it will become the method around which their whole interior life is built up. To decide arbitrarily, on impulse, that the last will be our case would be to erect an edifice that will collapse pathetically. One does not choose the 'Jesus Prayer'. One is called and led to it by God, if he sees fit. For the best prayer for everyone is, in the long run, that, be it what it may, towards which the Holy Spirit, circumstances, and lawful counsel may lead. What we do say in all seriousness and truth in favour of the 'Jesus Prayer' is that it helps to simplify and unify our spiritual life. Where complicated methods would dissipate and weary the attention, this prayer, consisting of a single word, has a unifying and integrating power beneficial to divided souls whose name and whose sin is legion (Mark 5, 9). Let the name of Jesus only become the centre of a life and it gathers all things together again. One must not, of course, think that the invocation of the name is a short cut which by-passes purifying discipline. The name of Jesus is itself an ascetic instrument, a filter through which may pass only those thoughts, words and acts worthy of the divine and living reality for which the name stands. The increase of the name in the soul means a corresponding decrease in the isolated self, a daily death to the egotism from which all sin flows.

The 'Jesus Prayer' has its stages. It deepens and expands as we find in the name an ever new content. To begin with it should be adoration and a sense of presence. This presence is then experienced as that of a Saviour (for this is the meaning of the word 'Jesus'). The invocation of the name is a mystery of salvation in so far as it brings deliverance. By the very saying of the name we already receive what we need. We receive it from now on in Jesus, who is not only the giver but the gift; not only the purifier but all purity; not only the one who feeds the hungry and refreshes the thirsty but the food and the drink. He is the substance of all good things (if we do not take the word in a strictly metaphysical sense). His name gives peace to the tempted: instead of arguing with temptation, instead of attending to the raging storm (this was, after his good beginning, the fault of Peter on the lake), why not look at Jesus alone and go towards him,

walking on the waves, taking refuge in his name? Let the man who is tempted recollect himself gently and say the name without worry or feverishness, letting that name fill his heart and form a barrier against contrary winds. And if a sin has been committed, then let the name serve for immediate reconciliation. Without hesitation or delay let it be said with repentance and perfect charity and it will become at once a sign of pardon and Jesus will return in homely fashion to the life of the sinner as, when he rose, he returned and sat unaffectedly at the table, where the disciples who had forsaken him gave him fish and honeycomb. Clearly there is no question of rejecting or underestimating the appointed means of penance and absolution that the Church offers to sinners: we are here speaking only of what goes on in the privacy of the soul.

The name of Jesus is more than a mystery of salvation, more than help in need, more than pardon after sin. It is a means whereby we can apply to ourselves the mystery of the Incarnation. More even than the presence, it brings with it union. As we pronounce the name we enthrone Jesus in our hearts, we put on Christ; we offer our flesh to the Word that he may assume it in his Mystical Body; we let the inward reality and power of the word 'Jesus' overflow even in our members subject to the law of sin. We are thereby cleansed and hallowed. 'Place me as a seal on thy heart, as a seal on thy arm' (*Cant.*, 8, 6).

Yet the invocation of the name of Jesus opens to us not only a personal approach to the mystery of the Incarnation. By this prayer we also discover a little of the fullness of him who fills all in all (*Eph.* 1, 23).

The name of Jesus is an instrument, a means of transformation. When we say it, it helps us (without any pantheist implications) to transform the whole world in Jesus Christ. This is true even of inanimate nature. The material universe, which is not simply the visible symbol of the unseen beauty but which struggles with groans towards the Christ and whose possibilities a mysterious compulsion lifts up towards the bread and wine of salvation, this universe murmurs secretly the name of Jesus ('... the very stones will cry out': *Luke* 19, 40) and it belongs to the priestly

function of every Christian to voice this longing, to pronounce the name of Jesus on natural things, stones and trees, flowers and fruits, mountains and seas, to grant their secret its fulfilment, to bring near the answer to that prolonged unspeaking and unknowing expectation. We can also transform the animal world. Jesus, who declared that not even a sparrow is forgotten by the Father, and who lived in the desert 'with the beasts' (Mark 1, 13), has not left them outside his care and his influence. Like Adam in paradise we must give a name to all the animals; whatever be the name that science gives them we shall call down on each the name of Jesus, giving them thus their ancient dignity which we so often forget and recalling that they were created and loved by the Father in Jesus and for Jesus. But it is above all where men are concerned that the name of Jesus helps us to exercise a ministry of transfiguration. Jesus who, after his resurrection, willed to appear many times to his own 'under another form' (Mark 16, 12)—the unknown traveller on the road to Emmaus, the gardener near the tomb, the stranger standing on the lakeside—still meets us, disguised, in our daily life, still confronts us with that most important aspect of his presence: his presence in man. What we do to the least of our brethren, we do it to him. It is through the features of men and women that with the eyes of faith and love we can discern the face of the Lord; it is in stooping to the distress of the poor, the sick, sinners, all men, that we put our finger in the print of the nails, plunge our hand into the pierced side; we acquire a personal conviction of the resurrection and real presence (without confusion of essence) of Jesus Christ in his Mystical Body, and say with Thomas: 'My Lord and my God!' (John 20, 28). Now the name of Jesus is a practical and powerful means of transfiguring men in their most profound and divine reality. These men and women whom we meet in the street, the factory, the office, and especially those who seem to us irritating and unlikable, let us approach them with the name of Jesus in our hearts and on our lips; let us say silently over them this name (which is their true name); let us name them with this name in a spirit of adoration and service. Let us dedicate ourselves to them in a practical manner if possible, or at least

by an inward desire, and it will be Jesus Christ in them to whom we dedicate ourselves; by the recognition and silent worship of Jesus fettered in the sinner, in the criminal, in the prostitute, we in a certain way set free both our Master and his unfortunate captors. If we see Jesus in everyone, if we say 'Jesus' over everyone, we shall go about the world with a new vision and a new gift in our own heart. We can then, as far as in us lies, transform the world and make our own the words of Jacob to his brother: 'I have seen thy face as if it had been the face of God' (Gen. 33, 10).

The invocation of the name of Jesus has an ecclesial aspect. In that name we meet all those who are united to the Saviour, and in whose midst he abides. In that name we enclose all those whom the divine heart embraces. To pray for someone else is not so much to plead for him before God as to apply to his name the name of Jesus and to adhere to the intercession of our Lord himself for those whom he loves. We encounter here the mystery of the Church. Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Church. Whoever is in Jesus is in the Church. The name of Jesus is a means of uniting us to the Church, for the Church is in Christ. She is there without blemish. It is not that we can afford to lose interest in the existence and problems of the Church on earth, or close our eyes to the imperfections and disunion of Christians. We shall not separate the visible and invisible aspects of the Church; we shall not oppose them. But we know that what is implied in the name of Jesus is the spotless spiritual and eternal aspect of the Church, that Church which transcends every earthly manifestation and which no schism can rend. The words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman on 'the hour which comes and is even now come' (John 4, 23) when the true worshippers shall adore the Father, no longer at Jerusalem or on Garizim, but in spirit and in truth, appear to involve a contradiction. How can the hour have come already and yet be still to come? But because Jesus was there in his person Jerusalem and Garizim alike were infinitely surpassed, the hour had already come. We are in a similar position when we invoke the name of the Saviour. We cannot believe that divergent interpretations of the Gospel are true, or that divided Christians possess the same measure

of light; but we do believe that those who, as they say the name of Jesus, try to unite themselves to their Saviour by an act of unconditional obedience and perfect charity, override human divisions, participate in a certain way in the supernatural unity of the mystical body of Christ, and are, if not visibly and explicitly, at least invisibly and implicitly members of the Church. Thus the invocation of the name of Jesus from a sincere heart is a way towards Christian unity. It helps us also to renew in Jesus our communion with the faithful departed. To Martha, who declared her faith in the future resurrection, Jesus replied: '*I am* the resurrection and the life' (John 11, 25). That is to say, the resurrection is something other than a future event; the person of the risen Christ is already the life of all the redeemed; and instead of trying, whether in prayer, or by memory or imagination, to establish a direct spiritual contact between our dead and us, it is in Jesus, where their true life now is, that we should compel ourselves to reach out to them, linking with their own names the name of Jesus. These dead, whose life is hidden with Christ, make up the heavenly Church, the most numerous part of the whole eternal Church. In the name of Jesus we communicate with the saints who bear his name on their brow (Apoc. 22, 4), the angels of whom one said to Mary, 'Thou shalt call thy son by the name of Jesus' (Luke 1, 31), and with Mary herself; would that we could learn in the Spirit, long to understand and repeat the name of Jesus as Mary understood it and said it!

The name of Jesus can become for us a sort of Eucharist. Just as the mystery of the upper room gathered up the life and work of the Saviour, so a certain 'eucharistic' use of the name of Jesus gathers up and unites the aspects of that name which we have so far considered. The sacramental Eucharist cannot be confined within the limits of our theme. But our soul is also an upper room where Jesus desires to eat the pasch with his disciples and where the Lord's Supper can be celebrated, in an invisible manner, at any moment. In this purely spiritual supper the name of the Saviour may take the place of the bread and wine of the sacrament. We can make of the name of Jesus a thankoffering (and this is the

original meaning of the word 'Eucharist'), the support and substance of a sacrifice of praise rendered to the Father. In this interior and invisible offering we present to the Father, as we say the name of Jesus, a lamb slain, a life given, a body broken, blood which has been shed. In this sacrificial use of the holy name it becomes a way of applying the fruits of the unique and perfect oblation of Golgotha. There is no Lord's Supper without Communion. Our invisible Eucharist implies what tradition calls a spiritual communion, that is to say, the act of faith and desire by which the soul feeds on the body and blood of Christ without using the visible elements of bread and wine. Far be from our minds any thought of diminishing or underestimating the sacrament of the Eucharist as the Church uses it, or of confining ourselves to spiritual communion. But we believe that we are in the authentic tradition of the Church in proclaiming the reality of a constant, invisible, purely spiritual access to the body and blood of Christ, an access distinct from a general approach to his person, for it implies a special relation between us and our Saviour as the one who feeds and who is the nourishment of our souls. Now the name of Jesus may serve as the form, the support, the expression of this approach. It can be to us a spiritual food, a participation in the Bread of Life. 'Lord, give us always this bread' (John 6, 34). In this name, in this bread, we unite ourselves to all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ, to all those who sit down at the banquet of the Messias, we who being many are one bread, one body (1 Cor. 10, 17). And since the Eucharist shows forth the Lord's death until he come (1 Cor. 11, 26), since it is an anticipation of the eternal kingdom, the eucharistic use of the name of Jesus has also an eschatological significance: it proclaims the end and the second Advent, it is an ardent longing, not only for those occasional comings of Christ in our earthly life, but for that final coming of Christ to us which will be the moment of our death. There is a way of saying the name of Jesus which makes it a preparation for death, a leap of our heart beyond the barrier, a strong cry to the lover, 'whom though we have not seen, we love' (1 Peter 1, 8). To say 'Jesus' is indeed to repeat the cry of the Apocalypse, 'Come, Lord Jesus' (22, 20).

When we read the book of Acts, we see what a central place the name of Jesus held in the teaching and work of the Apostles. By them 'the name of the Lord Jesus was glorified' (Acts 19, 17); it was in this name that signs and wonders were done and lives were changed. After Pentecost the Apostles were able to proclaim the name 'with power'. There we find a pentecostal use of the name of Jesus, a use which is not confined to the Apostles but remains available to all believers. Only the weakness of our faith and charity prevents us from renewing in the name of Jesus the fruits of Pentecost, from putting demons to flight, and laying our hands on the sick and healing them. The saints still continue to do this. The Spirit writes the name of Jesus in letters of fire in the hearts of his elect. That name is a burning flame. But there is another link between the Holy Spirit and the invocation of the name of Jesus which is more interior than the pentecostal ministry of the Christian. In saying the Saviour's name we can have a certain 'experience' (the word is used with all necessary reservations) of the relation between the Son and the Holy Spirit. We can strive to follow the descent of the dove upon our Saviour, to unite our hearts (as far as a creature can unite itself to a divine activity) with the eternal movement of the Spirit towards Jesus. 'O, if I had the wings of a dove' (Ps. 54, 7), not only to take flight far from earthly sorrows, but to rest upon him who is all my good! O, if I could only hear 'the voice of the turtle' (Cant., 2, 12), say 'with unspeakable sighs' (Rom. 8, 26) the name of the Beloved! Then would the invocation of the name of Jesus be an initiation into the mystery of the loving relation between the Christ and the Spirit. On the other hand we should also be able to try to unite ourselves (keeping always our due measure) with the attitude of Jesus to the Holy Spirit. Conceived by the Spirit, driven by the Spirit, Jesus showed the humblest docility towards him whom the Father breathes forth. As we say the name of Jesus, let us unite ourselves (as far as it can be given to a creature to do) with the complete surrender of his life which Jesus made to this divine breathing. Let us find also in the name of Jesus a source whence the Spirit is diffused, let us

find in Jesus the abode whence the Spirit is sent to men, the lips wherewith the Spirit is breathed upon us. The invocation of the name of Jesus bringing us into touch with those different moments—the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, the sending of the Spirit to men by Jesus, the aspiration of Jesus towards the Father—will make us grow in the knowledge and friendship of him whom Paul calls the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4, 6).

And so we have the Son. And we have the Father. Our reading of the Gospels will remain superficial as long as we find there only one life and one message offered to men. The heart of the Gospel, the mystery of the Jesus is the relationship between the Father and his only Son. To say the name of Jesus is to pronounce the Word which was in the beginning, the Word which the Father says from all eternity. The name of Jesus, we might almost say (with a certain easily rectifiable anthropomorphism), is the only human word the Father says, in so far as he begets the Son and gives himself to him. To say the name of Jesus is to draw near to the Father, is to contemplate the love and the gift of the Father centred in Jesus, is to feel (in our poor measure) something of that love, and to associate ourselves with it from afar, is to hear the Father saying ‘Thou art my beloved Son’ and to answer with a humble ‘yes’ to that affirmation. On the other hand, to say the name of Jesus is to enter as far as a creature can into the filial sentiment of Christ. Having found in the word ‘Jesus’ the tender address of the Father, ‘My Son’, it is to find there also the tender reply of the Son, ‘My Father’. It is to recognise in Jesus the perfect likeness of the Father, to unite ourselves with the eternal movement of the Son towards the Father, with the total offering of the Son to the Father. To say the name of Jesus is (if one may so say) to unite in a certain way the Father to the Son and glimpse some dim reflection of their unity. It is to discover the best way to the heart of the Father.

We have, then, considered different aspects of the invocation of the name of Jesus. We have arranged them in a kind of ascending scale, useful perhaps from the teaching point of view, but nevertheless artificial since in fact these stages overlap and God ‘does not give the Spirit by measure’. At one

stage or another in the practice of the 'Jesus Prayer' it is good and even necessary to concentrate on one particular aspect of the divine name. But a time does come when such particularisation becomes a weariness, hard, sometimes even impossible. The consideration and invocation of the name of Jesus now embraces everything. All the implications of the name become for us simultaneously though confusedly present. We say 'Jesus' and we rest in a fullness, a totality which it is no longer possible for us to disunite. The name of Jesus brings with it the whole Christ. It admits us to the full presence. In it all the realities to which the name has been an approach are found: salvation and forgiveness, Incarnation and Transfiguration, Church and Eucharist, Spirit and Father. All things now seem to us as 'summed up in Christ' (Eph. 1, 10). The whole presence is everything. Without it the name is nothing. And he who has reached the presence no longer needs the name. The name is but the support of the presence, and at the end of the journey we become free of the name itself, free of all save Jesus, save the living and unspeakable contact with his person. The ray of light is composed of the many colours which the prism disperses. Thus the 'whole name', sign and vehicle of the full presence, acts like a burning-glass which receives and concentrates the white light of Jesus. This burning-glass—the name of him who is the light of the world—helps us to kindle that fire of which it was said, 'I am come to cast fire on the earth' (Luke 12, 49). If we attach ourselves to the name of Jesus we receive that special blessing which Scripture promises: 'Be merciful to me as thou art wont to be to those who love thy name' (Ps. 118, 132). And may the Lord be able, may the Lord be good enough to say of us what he said of Saul: 'He is to me a chosen vessel to carry my name' (Acts 9, 15).

## SILENCE AND PRAYER

DEBORAH PEASE ARMSTRONG

**T**HROUGHOUT the Church at the present time there is a growing movement of return to a closer love and more popular understanding and sharing in the prayer of the Liturgy. To a system which sees an earthly paradise in terms of the community, the Christian faith contrasts the fundamental truth of divine revelation that the relationship between man and God is one between a community of persons. But within that shared life of Christians there often exists a longing for greater simplicity and directness in the approach of the individual to God. For a baptised Christian does not primarily join an earthly society or adopt an ideology, he enters into a relationship with God, with three divine persons. God gives himself, adopts the Christian, who must then discover how to receive his adoption, how to get out of his own way, how to 'die in order to live'.

Liturgical worship which includes sacrifice, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, supplication and instruction is one powerful means of nourishing and educating the Christian in his life as adopted son of God. During public liturgical worship he is, above all, sharing in the life of the Christian family, publicly taking his place in the Mystical Body of Christ incarnate in his Church, publicly offering himself with the sacrifice and receiving the divine food with which the heavenly Father feeds his adopted sons.

But every wise human father knows that each of his children needs at times his undivided attention. How precious in family life are times when father and son or father and daughter have each other to themselves.

In this we may see a reflection of the complete relationship as it must develop between God and each individual soul. We need to 'have God to ourselves'. Certainly we do this most completely at the times of the common spiritual meal, sacramental communion; but normally this act is very much conditioned as a matter of practical necessity by our

fellow Christians, our distance from a church and so forth. I want therefore to suggest that some greater space, some further spiritual provision for the development of the essential private, personal relationship between the individual soul and the divine persons, must be found, and that it can be found in the practice as a normal and regular thing for everyone of recollection and silent prayer.

By *silent* prayer, I do not mean non-vocal meditation or mental prayer, but a kind of prayer which is closely related to that ‘prayer of quiet’ usually popularly associated with a considerable degree of advancement in ‘union with God’. In a previous article I tried to suggest that the ‘gift of the Spirit to every Christian’ is a truth too long neglected in contemporary practice and now I want to suggest that with the gift of the Spirit goes also the potential power to receive the gift of some degree of contemplative prayer. Furthermore, that this prayer will provide for every Christian, as it did for the greatest saints, wings to carry him towards God. Those who practise this prayer realise more fully their adoption as sons, they obey God’s will through love instead of from duty, they answer ‘I will because I want to, not because I must’.

This prayer is desirable but it is hard because of the nature of man as he is. He must first ‘die in order to live’. In this Christ is our example as in everything, but between him and ourselves lies the gulf of sin. The spirit of man, called to intimacy with a spiritual God, is inseparably part of a physical outer life. The whole problem of the way to union is how to give the primacy to the spirit—through divine grace to direct the whole man, body and soul, towards God who is a spirit. The Church as the mystical incarnation of God the Son shows forth in her sacraments, physically, the invisible life of God. But these outward and physical signs of prayer are insidiously easy to follow without the corresponding inward recollection and stillness.

In Christ alone the outward life, every minute of every day, every breath he breathed, every word and gesture were perfectly directed in its wholeness towards his Father through the Holy Spirit. In him each moment of time during his earthly life was already redeemed and united to its source.

There was no conflict of his will between ‘outer and inner’. His human nature was entirely grace, totally united to the divine life of the other persons of the holy Trinity.

Within the Church are to be found all the necessary means to enable us to reach the condition of ‘co-heirs with Christ’, but because of our state of ‘tendency towards sin’ we lose our direction; that perfect union of body and soul which gives complete primacy and dominion to the spirit is beyond us. It is a state of divine order or perfect justice, and the human state is one of conflict, disorder and injustice. This is plainly demonstrated by the circumstances of Christ’s birth, life, passion and death. No greater example of human injustice can be imagined. Thus at its simplest the aim of a Christian life can be regarded as a desire to achieve, through union with Christ, divine order or justice within each individual and in his relationship with others.

But in man’s ‘fallen’ state this simple ideal quickly disintegrates into a picture of contrasts as between matter and spirit, mind and body, heart and head, tangible and intangible, etc. And in so far as we see not only life but the practice of religion in these terms, just so far are we separated from that oneness through Christ with God at which we are ostensibly aiming.

The form that prayer takes determines the direction in which each individual develops towards union with God. We are conventional acquaintances of God, people whom he will consent ‘to know’, but the door to his private room stands open in vain and we do not press on towards friendship and love, towards an intimate knowledge of his ways and affections.

Christ as man is our example in his prayer. Never for a moment was he separated from the Holy Trinity, but he frequently went ‘apart, himself alone to pray’. He had no need to do this unless it was to show by his actions what we should do when we wish to pray, and also to show visibly his permanent invisible state. As God he was always ‘himself alone’, the ‘One who is’. As man he walked, talked, ate and slept with the disciples and as man he left them to pray in silence and solitude.

Within the Church there has always been a tradition of

'contemplative' prayer carried on in silence and solitude. In its most easily understood form it consists in the 'Practice of the Presence of God': 'the exercise of remembering God so that the love of him may be born and formed in the soul to stir it to carry out his commands. This consciousness or mindfulness of God was the purpose of solitude and silence, of manual work, prayer and *lectio divina*—of the whole apparatus of the eremitical and monastic lives'. Also in the classical Catholic tradition of mysticism is the principle of 'abandonment', but 'there is a difference (and it is the difference of contemplation) between people of ordinary (I would say beginners') piety whose love rests on motives (discursively) proposed by faith and those who give themselves to complete renunciation. To the latter, God gives a persisting love of attraction which produces continual union or else a thirst for God, a need of constantly uniting themselves in heart to him. Such a one aspires to remain in union with God; love thus begets contemplation.' [Quoted from the *Downside Review*, Spring 1953, by the Abbot of Downside.]

In considering this passage I am not drawing particular attention to various categories which are suggested, for example 'mystical tradition' or 'eremitical life', but to the principle that it is a form of ordinary or beginners' piety to pray and love with the intellect and in dependence upon motives consciously proposed by faith. This kind of love does not always express the attitude of a child towards its father. The presence of certain motives in prayer may be the negation of that silence in the soul necessary for it to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The practice of abandonment by *inward* silence and solitude, quiet waiting in the remembered presence of an infinitely other and wholly spiritual God opens the way to 'contemplation'. It is this kind of contemplation which may be developed inwardly by most Christians. To say this is apparently to sweep away yet another division, that between 'mystic' and 'non-mystic', or that between 'contemplatives' or 'religious' and *ordinary* Christians. But the difference is one of degree, not of kind. If every living soul is created in the image of God and capable of reaching eternal union with him in heaven, cannot every baptised and adopted Christian claim also some share

in this intimate life of love described above as 'contemplation'? How can any Christian be intended to rest in 'beginners' piety'?

It seems clear that all are called to some degree of inward abandonment, to the practice of total inward silence, to wait upon the Holy Spirit, 'the soul's delightful guest', in quietness.

There is a sense in which even a few minutes of this truly silent prayer corresponds to that death which is necessary to life. For this inward silence and quiet is a temporary death not only to the senses but to the mind in so far as it is to be found in the purity of faith; the Christian's whole attention is turned inward towards the spiritual reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit known only by faith—he directs his affections to love and longing for this silent, unknown, divine person.

The older a human person is, the more confirmed in the necessary compromise with the flesh which comes with adult human life, the harder the beginning of the practice of this kind of prayer will be. But our Lord told us to become as little children. Perhaps the secret in the life of prayer is to remain as little children.

It has been noted above that the struggle to reach God involves, in its simplest terms, the struggle to give the primacy to spiritual realities. But in children to a much greater extent than in adults (so-called) this condition is naturally present. The child begins by seeing the world in the true way. The 'unhappened fact' seen through a mingling of imagination and faith very often has a more pressing reality than what we call truth. The bundle of rags *is* the most beautiful and lovable doll in the universe, the empty cocoa-tin *is* the big drum. Many children stay so long in this dream world of imagination and faith that they are accused of not knowing the difference between truth and falsehood.

Perhaps it may be true that the foundations of silent inward prayer, to a silent and invisible spirit-person, may be laid in early childhood, when the invisible is as real as the visible. The loving trust of the young child towards its human father can be directed towards its invisible heavenly Father, the seed of true 'abandonment' can be sown.

Even a very young child can be taught the difference between, for example, fairy tales and miracles. Provided faith, trust and love are fostered, with the startlingly vivid help of the child's imagination, his growing reason can be relied on to sort out theology from myth: for the two are closely related.

We erect so many barriers of systems, of regulations and categories between ourselves and the Father. If we could spend only ten minutes a day in the effort to love him entirely but passively with every faculty we have, in the effort which will involve 'death' to all the noises of sense and intellect, death to everything which is not God—his love would flood our being; the action of the Holy Spirit would silently and invisibly transform us from ourselves to Christ. We should no longer become arrested in beginners' piety, but receive a measure of contemplation.

In suggesting that every baptised Christian is called to progress in union with God in this life, and that silent inward prayer bringing contemplation is the most direct way, I do not mean to imply that there are not different types of human nature. The two essentials seem to be: inward *quiet prayer* combining love and attention which depends upon *silence*—a true inward silence which follows the deliberate effort towards withdrawal from the external things of sense, what is called recollection. To some it will be necessary, anyway at first, to think of the Holy Spirit, to talk mentally to him as to a person. But whatever the temperament of the individual may be, the essential is to turn inward, not upon self, but upon the Holy Spirit. (To avoid misunderstanding, I should say that I am not suggesting this instead of meditation on the sacred humanity of our Lord, which would be contrary to the teaching of all the great masters of prayer, for example St Teresa of Avila, but as a corollary.)

This kind of inward prayer can be practised whether or not the individual is a 'mystic' who is conscious of 'mystic experience'. It is a well-known fact that the religious Society of Friends practise only this kind of prayer. A glance at the journals and lives of some of the more outstanding members of this society shows how immensely fruitful in their spiritual lives and in practical good works this limited prayer has

proved to be. They seem to begin where some Catholics tend to leave off. Over and over again come the phrases 'to wait on God', 'to abandon myself to the Lord's will', to kneel down in distress and wait for his guidance and arise comforted and at peace.

St Bernard says that those who practise contemplative prayer must be filled like bowls and then overflow. The countless good works and famous charity of the Friends would seem to testify to this overflow from bowls filled full by the practice of contemplative prayer. All this seems to point to the conclusion that contemplation is not reserved for the giants of the spiritual life but is one of God's treasures of which he has said, 'ask and you shall receive'.

The present age is one of faith in techniques and love of motion. Possibly neither of these activities is essentially a human one. The animal has technical skills of great beauty. It is tempting to see in the modern love of speed the anti-thesis of the changeless 'I am' of God, the work of the devil dragging the spirit of man down into the cosmic dance of the electrons. To 'die daily' to physical activities of time and change in the world is to reach towards eternity. The kingdom of heaven is within us and it is there that we must not fail to look for it. There shall we find the entrance to the inner rooms of our Father's house, the intimate life which he calls us to share with him. Our part in the life of the Mystical Body, in the liturgy and the common life of Christians, must support and be supported by this intimate union of love between the soul and God.

*Bardsey Island,*  
July 1953.

## GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

R. H. J. STEUART, S.J.

**D**ON'T let us make any mistake: we are *ordered* to make this prayer of petition. Go to God as to your absolute All—your father, brother, creator. I must turn to him as the lover of souls—as one who loves me beyond the dreams of imagination; who has only one care for me, that the best may be mine; who longs for me. 'As the hart panteth' (I am not afraid to put that the other way round) so does God long for me. People complain 'I can't meditate, I can't pray'. That is often another way of saying 'I'm not interested enough'. Is it possible that I have not got enough interest in it? Am I sure that I really want it enough?

I have always maintained that it is a mistake to divide prayer up too sharply into ordinary and extraordinary. Prayer is a continuous thing like a tree—branches, leaves, flowers, fruit; quite different in its different states but all one thing; from the *Hail Mary* to the tremendous heights of which the great saints have been able to show us just a glimpse. The prayer of the mystic is hidden because it belongs to God's plane of existence, and the words we use about it are like mathematics in ordinary words: it is like using double basic English.

God has planted in our hearts a desire for him as he really is and in this life we shall never attain to that. We ought to be content to know that heaven is at last attaining to that which we have been striving after all our lives through, and prayer is the utterance of that growth upwards. I don't know if I am going too far if I draw the resemblance to trees like this. Just as there are some trees of red wood, that grow to the height of 300 feet, higher than the tower of Westminster Cathedral, others attain their full growth at 20 feet, and they are perfect trees. The redwood tree is not more a tree, nor the others less. So, looking back, we find persons who have risen to perfect heights, and others who have attained nothing like that and yet who have used all the powers in them.

'Thus therefore shall ye pray.' The main thing in this clause is to ask; God wants us to ask him for everything. Daily bread means all the things I want, big and little, material and spiritual. Every time I make a prayer of petition, it is an act of adoration of God, it is an act of faith that he is answering it even though this does not appear to be so. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' The implication is that by saying that to God, I make an act of faith that all my daily bread, everything I need, all come from God; not as if God were a department handing things out, but because each of us is to him as if there were no other.

So the first meaning of that clause is that you are to look upon everything as coming from God. Life will go on according to fixed lines, but I must try to see that everything is handed to me by the very hand of God himself. So when I pray the prayer of petition, I am implicitly making an act of faith that everything, whatever it is, comes from God. And another act of faith, more difficult perhaps, that everything that comes from him is good. He could not give us anything that was not good. Many people find it difficult to believe that everything that comes from him is good—they even seem able to prove that it is not good!

Our Lord said in ordinary language, 'Ask and ye shall receive; knock and it shall be opened to you'. You often find you ask for things and don't receive them and say, 'I could be quite prepared for "No" if I asked for frivolous things, but many of the things I have asked for appeared to be very good, and still "No" was the answer. Perhaps I could bear up if it were only myself that was concerned, but so often I pray for others, make intercession, and they don't get it so far as one sees.' When I ask for a material object I am exercising faith in God, hope and trust, because I believe that he can and I believe that he will, which means that I believe there is a bond of love between us. Every time I pray for an object I exercise those three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. What more do you want? You may say, 'Yes, but I want a little on account! I have prayed for these things.' What things? 'This, that and the other.' But I ask you—life is too serious to be encumbered with these frivolities. I have prayed for more money, good weather,

and so on, but add them all together and what did they add up to? There is only one thing necessary. There was Martha in and out of the kitchen; all very good; Martha getting that dinner ready. Eventually she asked what Mary was doing beside our Lord, and Martha said, 'Look what I have to do, and there is Mary, my own sister who usually helps me, letting me get on with it'. But he said, 'Martha, you are busy about many things; Mary has chosen the better part'. The better part: adoration of Christ, love of Christ, love of God. So I think the greater part of our petitions we shall find were trivialities and we should perhaps have thought less of God had he granted them. Things that seemed so urgent to us at the time.

We are taken out of our depth when we are involved in something which demands knowledge of God. Our hesitation and doubt and unhappiness about unanswered prayer is due to our trying to express something in terms of everyday things which is really something known to God alone. 'My just man liveth by faith.' 'Without faith it is impossible to serve God.' You cannot live up to what he demands of you except purely upon faith.

So often the things we think are good are not good, or not good at that particular time, or someone else has stronger claims to them. Our Lord said, 'Give us this day our daily bread', *after* he had said, 'Thy will be done'. Therefore in all prayer, certainly in the prayer of petition, that is the key-stone of it, that ultimately my prayer in essence should be, 'Thy will be done'. Very often I don't think of that at all. *I want it, or someone else wants it. I should try to accustom myself to ask myself whether my petition, whatever form it takes, really is 'Thy will be done as it is in heaven'.* Whatever else there may be to make my prayer an exceptionally good one, it may be that it does not square with that fundamental 'Thy will be done'.

Then again, perhaps we have not enough faith. If you had as much as a pinhead of real faith, God would be in your hands, so to speak: you could move mountains.

One of our Lord's statements was: 'Whatever you ask for in my name shall be granted'. The Church takes up this word of our Lord and ends all her liturgical prayers with *per*

*Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.* When our Lord says ‘in my name’, he means us to understand ‘in my context’, i.e. ‘live your lives as I lived mine’. Just in the proportion that you are Christ-like, so shall you receive, for then your prayer is real, and you have a claim on God. Is your life like Christ’s?—in other words, does your life run on Christ’s principles? Take Christ’s example in the agony in the garden. Remember, he made a petition, he asked for a thing. Now, he could not ask for anything except what was best: there was nothing selfish or narrow in his request. ‘Father, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but yours.’ Well, his request was not granted, so I am in good company. ‘Thy will be done.’ It does not make it easy. Sometimes it makes it more difficult. All that matters is that in my heart of hearts I want God’s will, and God’s will only, to be done.

I know a lot of people will say, ‘I am still worried’. I know you are, because you are trying to explain in terms of earthly experience something that belongs to the divine region. Every time I make a petition to God, every time I turn to God, on that very account, whether my prayer has been granted or not, what has really been granted is that on account of that prayer I am nearer to God, dearer to God, and holier, because I have done that thing that was laid down.

Christianity is a heroic religion. It is not a religion of the world; it is purely supernatural, and therefore we shall be called on as routine to do things that involve heroism to a certain extent. We ought to be much happier on the subject of granted or not granted prayer of petition, as that is not the real gist of the matter. Petition that I want God’s will to be done more and more is the real gist of the matter. Our asking is a token that that is what we feel.

‘Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?’ . . . ‘Bid me come to thee upon the waters.’ Our Lord says, ‘Come!’ We must learn the tremendous degree of faith he wants of us, for we have not yet that complete faith which sticks at nothing at all.

God binds himself, he pledges himself to us by his own divine word, that he won’t let us starve for grace. He will give us all that is necessary; for the spiritual life is, like the natural life, a growth. We don’t get fruit from the root, but

from the grown branches. Saints are not ready-made. Turn to God, our Lord tells us; turn to him for everything that is necessary for your spiritual life, for your natural life. You cannot ask too much. Recall M. Dupont's query to a petitioner who was making long phrases to God in her prayer. 'Do you want to be cured? Then say, "Cure me!".' God is your father, so be more child-like in your approach to him. If you don't ask, you won't receive. If what you ask is good for you, if it is right for you to have it, then God will give it when you ask him; you will get it. He is a loving father. But if I ask for things that seem best to me and I do not get them, then I have just to say, 'I am mistaken; God sees it is not good for me'. God sees and knows: trust him.

So it is not very long, I think, before anybody to whom God is a reality uses prayer of petition; we are told to. Even the highest contemplatives and mystics used it, though their form might be different from other people's.

True, my prayer will tend to become less and less self-regarding and more and more something for God. 'My delight is to be with the children of men.' God made us for himself. I am only truly fulfilling the object of my creation when I am trying to achieve, even in this life, some degree of that complete surrender to God of which the next life will consist.



## SEAT OF WISDOM<sup>1</sup>

MGR H. FRANCIS DAVIS

**T**HE Lord is my Light.' These words from the psalm form the device of our senior University. Come back with me a moment to the early years of the twelfth century. Come to Oxford, to the vicinity of St Mary the Virgin's Church in the High Street. A certain

<sup>1</sup> A sermon broadcast on October 25th, 1953. This sermon is as delivered from Newbold Revel for Education Sunday, but for a few words omitted in the broadcast to save time.

Theobald, a master from Normandy, arrives here with his own group of disciples. Later his place is taken by Robert Pullen and Vacarius of Bologna.

In the second half of the century, there comes a whole migration of masters and disciples, driven back from Paris because of discrimination against their countrymen. Oxford was then an island town, surrounded by marshland and rivers, at the spot where the Cherwell joins the Isis or Thames: an important river crossing with easy access to London. The food supply was good, and it was in the centre of England's population.

All these scholars were loyal sons of the Church, and naturally gathered round an Oxford church to form what would quickly become an educational centre of world importance. So rapid was its growth that we read in Gerald the Welshman's record that Oxford's clergy excelled over those of all England, that there were doctors in many faculties, and clerical and lay students of all ranks. There was even, in Catte Street, just under St Mary's, the inevitable bookshop, with its binders, illuminators, writers and parchmenters. We hear also, before the century was out, of University Sermons from St Mary's pulpit.

From that day to this, St Mary's has been at the heart of Oxford University; and, since the thirteenth century, its spire has been perhaps its most characteristic landmark. Whether or not the first arrivals adopted as their device 'The Lord is my Light', they would rejoice that their lot had thrown them near a church dedicated to the Mother of the Lord. Because she had brought forth the Incarnate Word or Wisdom, she had long been known as the Seat or Mother of Wisdom. She, they hoped, would continue to give Christ to the world as the Light of Wisdom.

As they proudly organised a school in their homeland, they may well have repeated the words of an English prayer, found in the archives of an English college of that age: 'May we, following the Lamb without stain, with gladness behold thee the Son with thy Mother in our native land!' They had in mind to do in their native land what their English and French forefathers had already done in Paris, among the vineyards on the left bank of the Seine, around

the hill and shrine of St Genevieve, where the University is still found.

Other such groups of varying size and importance had gathered in churches and monastic cloisters in many parts of the Catholic world. The Church was their natural patron, and for many years masters and pupils were mainly from among the clergy. The Church could not help encouraging them, since she had always believed—as indeed by her calling she *must* believe—that education is a sacred duty. Her Master, Jesus Christ, had said: ‘I am come a light into the world; that whosoever believeth in me, may not remain in darkness’. Evil loves darkness; and light, so far as it is light, comes from God; in fact, God is light. Through sin and ignorance the world has fallen into barbarity; it must be redeemed in Christ from both sin and ignorance. All that is good, they knew, belongs to Christ, and must be won back for him.

But surely it will not do to identify virtue with knowledge. Knowledge without grace will never save men from sin and hate. I agree; nor, on the other hand, can there be salvation without the light of knowledge.

You may be thinking: Is then salvation only for the well-educated? Obviously not; salvation is for all, and higher education for the more gifted. But adequate knowledge of truth among the many does depend upon the due cultivation of the talents of each. For mankind is a society; each benefits by all, and all by each; the more gifted hold their greater and deeper knowledge in trust for others; discussion and mutual intercourse give everyone some share in laying up society’s common treasure of wisdom. Some part in that common treasure is for each of you and for me, whatever our personal contribution. Only thus can we all begin to have a true understanding, love and reverence for God and our neighbour.

Church and school have at this point each an important responsibility. The institute of learning must see that talents are developed, and that the more gifted share their blessings with their less fortunate neighbours. The Church must see that, once knowledge is gained by individual or community, it is used for the glory of God and the good of mankind.

Ceaselessly must she proclaim: Knowledge is for men, not men for knowledge; and true knowledge should be fruitful knowledge. It is the education for life that matters; and it is this conviction which inspires the Christian scholar, not the learning by which we impress, or, still worse, deceive or harm.

The urgency of fruitful—as opposed to barren or harmful—knowledge, of bringing the light of truth for the life of men, was recognised by Oxford's first chancellor, Robert Grosseteste. Oxford was in fact this very last week celebrating the seventh centenary of his death. Robert, though one of the greatest lovers of learning in his day, was yet a greater lover of men and women. According to tradition, he once observed: 'Our Lord said: Feed my sheep; not teach my shepherds'. If one did not know him, one might have thought he was attacking universities and training colleges. Actually, he was warning us that the Christian should not seek learning with the sole object of supporting an academic existence among professors or in the pages of learned reviews. He must let his light shine before men, before ordinary men and women like you and me. For he is a follower of Christ, who was not merely the Light, but the Light of *men*.

How truly Christian has been the best spirit of our senior university is illustrated by two other Oxonians I love, St Thomas More in the fifteenth century and John Henry Newman in the nineteenth. In both there was a marriage of humanistic culture with deep Christian piety. Culture without religion will be superficial, if not harmful. Piety without culture remains crude and undeveloped.

Both of these leaders knew we could not reach the whole light without reaching Christ. Nor could we follow Christ without loving the truth. The truth and goodness in this world came from Christ, and we should bring them back to him for his consecration.

This ideal is perfectly expressed by Newman: 'Christ came for this very purpose, to gather together into one all the elements of good dispersed throughout the world, to make them his own, to illuminate them with himself, to reform and refashion them into himself. He came to make a new and better beginning of all things than Adam had been, and

to be a fountain-head from which all good henceforth might flow.'

Men like More and Newman did not fear learning. It was not a question of choosing between Christ and culture. Of course, Christ comes first: but Christ would be less honoured if we failed to adorn the nature he came to consecrate with whatever true culture we can bear. In the truth and light his help brings us, he will recognise his own choice gifts to men.

In St Thomas More, culture was joined to a rare English humour: a good humour, not a mocking frivolity as is sometimes found in the pedant or bookman. When surprise was expressed that he should find it worth his while to instruct his children so carefully at a time when their very personal safety was endangered, he replied that, if they must pass out of their course before their parents, he would rather they died well-instructed than ignorant. He used to tell these children they were to take learning and virtue for their meat with play merely as their sauce.

At their different times, More and Newman both lived almost in the shadow of St Mary the Virgin. Both knew how to unite learning with virtue, and true humanism with full Christian faith. Newman wrote the great classic on Humanism, more appreciated today than ever before, which he modestly called *The Idea of a University*. Culture he thought second only to God's word and grace the source of true human freedom. But, contrary to a common view, he exposed the fallacy that the best humanism could save man or the world without Christian charity. It was the fallacy of his day to think the veneer of the 'English gentleman' an adequate substitute for religion.

These two Oxford educationalists had their enemies. St Thomas More lost his life for refusing to sacrifice his conscience to the State; Newman struggled all his life to protect revealed truth against Agnosticism. Undue State interference on the one hand, and the exclusion of Christian faith on the other, are still in some countries a danger to the freedom and fullness of learning. A further danger, against which Newman and Grosseteste struggled, is utilitarianism, which would subordinate knowledge to selfish, merely pro-

fessional or material interests rather than to the perfecting of the individual and the good of the community.

The watchword, then, that Oxford has inherited from its medieval days is *Dominus illuminatio mea*, 'The Lord is my Light'. Was it this motto which was the inspiration of Newman's hymn, 'Lead, kindly Light'? Surely no better watchword has ever been chosen by a home of learning. It implies that culture, knowledge and wisdom come only from God. It also supposes the impossibility of a clash between true knowledge and God's Word. That Word, which in the flesh was our Lord Jesus Christ himself, is it not 'the Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world'?

Most of you who are listening are probably teachers in some sphere or other; with many of you it is your profession. It is your vocation to bring God's light to men, and bring men to God's light. The Lord must be a light to all; and, where is light, there is the Lord. In your sphere you are mediators, just as we priests are mediators in the sphere of grace.

Your students will come to you undeveloped, still in the darkness of ignorance. First, you will show them their powers; you will bring these powers to light. You will warn them of their limitations. You will encourage, yet being careful to protect them from pride or vanity. You will make them understand that 'the Lord is their Light' who will not hide himself from those that seek him humbly. You will encourage them, showing them that their gifts come from God for a purpose. They are a power for good that they hold in trust for mankind. They must not think these powers can bear good fruit unless they work in co-operation with others, and under the guidance of the Kindly Light. And when you have taught them all you know, you will send them forth, perhaps, into regions of light you have not yet penetrated yourselves. This is particularly true of universities; for every teacher knows he may have the privilege of pupils destined to be greater than himself.

It seems that much of our search for the light—which is a search for the Lord—has some likeness to blind night-flying. We know that truth is our target; but we are still in the dark as to how we shall find it. Does not God some-

times seem to guide us in the way a pilot is guided to his target on a kind of beam which shows us our way to the light? We so often start in darkness, we pray for his help, we listen to his inspirations and we find that—if we are docile and humbly persevering, following every beam sent out by God—we arrive at a new and fuller understanding. It may be an understanding of God, or it may be of men, or of nature.

Was it not some such guidance our forefathers were thinking of, when they chose the watchword, 'The Lord is my Light'? Great Christian teachers like St Augustine and St Bonaventure were convinced that a patient listening attitude to God's truth, whether coming from Scripture or from Nature or whatever source, is the best disposition with which to begin our search for wisdom. Newman used to say that it was the distinctively Christian virtues, such as sincerity, modesty, patience and humility, which were the best guarantees of a prudent judgment.

Yet are not many Christian people suspicious of overmuch learning? And is not learning often intolerant of religion? The Scriptures have it that 'The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God'. Yet are there not many seemingly learned people who say they know not God? Suspicion of scholarship is not really suspicion of true learning, but of superficial pretence of learning. Wisdom is never superficial. Having deep roots, it is fruitful, it serves mankind and recognises the Creator. It will not stop short at that closed view of reality which collects many truths but knows not the Truth. In Christ there is no pretence; in him all is light, and true wisdom longs to see him wholly.

Bitterness against the more fortunate may exist in those who have been denied opportunities. The answer to this is not to deprive the favoured few, but to work together to open opportunities to all that can use them. Vocations differ, but each is for the benefit of all; and the whole community should work to ensure that each can fulfil his calling.

Where religious people have feared learning, it has been due to lack of understanding or faith. Christ can redeem with his love and truth, without destroying anything of this world which is good, as Robert Grosseteste, Thomas More, Newman and other Christian leaders have taught us. The

so-called learning which opposes revelation is really fallen man's spirit of independence which is incompatible with true wisdom.

We Christian educators should go forward full of faith and courage, trusting in the Lord who is our light, his Son who is his life-giving Word, and the Spirit who unites all in harmony. Whether we say of the Father, 'The Lord is my Light', or of the Son from another Scripture, 'Come, Lord Jesus', or of the Holy Spirit, 'Send forth thy Spirit', we are praying that all three Persons of the Holy Trinity may fill us with the divine light to search for, and use fruitfully, all the truth by which man lives.

May the 'kindly light' lead us to the Truth!



### POINT OF VIEW

**I**HAVE been following up a most fascinating trail recently with regard to the origin of the word 'Mass'. This has always been obscure, and the explanation usually brought forward is most unsatisfactory, i.e., that it derives from the *Ite, missa est* at the close, which is also obscure in its meaning.

I once heard it said by an archaeologist who was also something of a philologist that it simply means 'the Meeting', but on what grounds I did not then ask.

Now, if taken in the sense of 'the Gathering', and especially the eucharistic gathering, the ordinary word 'mass' (with a small 'm') will be found to fit perfectly, and moreover takes us into the very 'inwards' of the Christian Mystery. For in old English it was *maesse*, in French *masse*, in Latin *massa*, and the ultimate derivation, according to the dictionaries, is from the Greek *maza*, a barley cake, and *masso*, 'I knead together'. So the underlying sense all through is to 'bring-together-into-one', especially many of the same kind into a unity, e.g., particles, grains, articles, or people of the same mind. We call a 'mass meeting' of adherents to the same political party, and speak of 'massing'

troops; an officers' mess may belong, too, and even the 'mess of pottage', being a stew of many ingredients.

But, seemingly to clench all this, I came upon this old liturgical formula for Eucharistic thanksgiving in the Eastern rite from the second-century *Didache*:

*For the Cup*: 'We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge thou hast made known to us thro' Jesus thy Servant. To thee be glory for evermore.'

*For the Broken Bread*: 'As this broken bread was scattered over the hills and then when gathered became one mass, so may thy Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom.'

The early Church was nearer to the essence of things, and the emphasis was on our incorporation with Christ into God. St Augustine is full of the same idea when speaking on the Eucharist in his homilies. On *Corpus Christi* in the Breviary he is quoted thus:

'... and yet there is but one Meat and one Drink, which doth work in them that feed thereon that "this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal put on immortality", namely communion with that general assembly and Church of God's holy children who are . . . all one, fully and utterly. And therefore it is, as men of God before our time have taken it, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath set before us his Body and his Blood in the likeness of things which from being many, are reduced into one. In one loaf are many grains of corn, and in one cup the juice of many grapes.'

So that very ordinary little word would give its meaning both to the physical gathering of the faithful and to its purpose and mystical effect, i.e., our being one-in-Christ (which was the burden of his discourse both after the miracle of the loaves and at the Last Supper, according to St John). Was he not the Bread offered for us on Calvary by which our At-one-ment was made with the Father, and offered now under the very figure of bread; and are we not the grains that go together with it to make a continual extension of Calvary? And could not the *Ite, missa est* also mean, 'Go, our bond is made, our meeting is over, our business completed, our barley cake made and offered'? A little far-

fetched, perhaps, but less so than the usual explanation, 'Go, it is sent', the feminine ending to agree with an *oblatio* understood. For what is the *oblatio* but the means of our at-one-ment?

Moreover there is the military command, 'Dis-miss', which seems to have little to do with *mittere*, 'to send', but must mean to dis-mass, or dis-band; and in Hebrew *masoreth* has a meaning akin to 'bond', and the *Massorah* is 'the body of traditional information on the texts of the Hebrew Bible'.

But the study of this root meaning at its Greek source is the most fruitful for a deeper understanding of the Mass, and in fact opens the door to an endless vista regarding the Mystical Body of Christ and of how we go to the building of it up, or should do. This of itself is a convincing testimony that our quarry has been rightly found. For if the following up of any particular truth in any department is found to bear witness to the Truth (as it must, if correct), then the validity of the particular truth is thereby corroborated, and 'they knew him in the breaking of bread'.

It may also be remembered that 'the breaking-of-bread from house to house' was the earliest title for our 'Mass' of today.

CATHARINE ENGLEHEART



## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

SIDNEY F. BREEN

One of the tragedies of our time is that practically the whole world has the idea that it is not called to prayer. Yet the paths of prayer form the map of life. It seems odd that, at a time when men are not only off the road but have forgotten there is one, the need for direction is still questioned. For it is spiritual direction which helps men both to find and follow the ways of God. But there are still those who deny its necessity completely, even in the pursuit of the highest sanctity. More commonly it is simply stated that it is not so necessary these days. This applies, presumably, even to the youth of today. It is argued that the young show no liking for direction. They are more independent of mind and better educated than in the past, and so less in need of direction, and sooner able

to read spiritual authors for themselves. To see the spiritual life as a set of rules, counsels, and commands would only discourage them. There is even the suggestion that direction is rather un-English, something from France which English youth does not need.

There are those who grudgingly admit that spiritual direction might be helpful to exceptional souls, contemplative souls and some religious, particularly young religious. But even here it is hardly necessary, for in one sense, religious have much less need than the laity. Usually they are better instructed and are already leading a life guaranteed by the Church as suited to direct them to God. Those holding this view are quick, indeed too quick, to quote St Teresa of the Child Jesus, ‘C'est Jésus tout seul qui m'a instruite, aucun livre, aucun théologien ne m'a enseignée’. She is their patron in this regard, as she seems to have done rather well without a director in the strict sense. Some incline to the opinion that with religious, especially nuns, direction is better left to the Mistress of Novices or the Mother Prioress. She is at hand, so that matters can be settled immediately without waiting for a visit from the priest director. Her share of direction is expressly legislated for, in many cases. She is better acquainted with the various temperaments of her community, and seeing the nuns in their daily life her direction can be more concrete. Here the secular priest is conscious of his own inexperience of formal community life. He is often made more conscious of it by the occasionally expressed preference of religious, naturally enough, for ‘Order men’.

Of course, there are many, many priests who fully realise, and fulfil magnificently, their obligations as directors. But there must be many, regular and secular, who realise the obligation to provide direction, but are overawed by the high degree of personal sanctity it seems to demand, and the degree of knowledge and experience required. The young priest easily feels unequal to the task. His confidence is not increased when told—and it never loses in the telling—that seminary life leaves him completely ignorant of feminine psychology, a handicap in his dealings with considerably more than half the faithful. So he hopes that special kindness in the confessional and an extra pious word for his penitents will meet their need and his obligations. In cases where this seems insufficient he suggests some suitable reading matter. If this does not suffice he suggests some other priest he hopes more likely to be a good director. So there is one less director available.

There may be few who hold these views, and fewer who act on them. But they have undue influence on those whose views are not so clear, and for whom the principle that ‘some direction sometimes for some souls seems necessary’ is sufficiently vague as to seem prudent. The results are most unfortunate. Not only is due direction lacking but it becomes less and less sought after, so that confessions from 6.0 to 9.0 soon become con-

fessions from 6.0 to 8.0. That is only one of the evils. It may be that the laity become simply bewildered, for now they seem to have an insoluble problem. Either spiritual writers over-estimate the need for directors, or the Church does not meet the need. Some begin to think that perhaps, after all, the laity are not called to the heights. Even those who are most desirous and determined to find a director give up the search. Many turn to unsuitable books, showing a marked preference for authors who leave the Pearly Gates wide open. Some of these books are enjoying a remarkable popularity today. Even the more suitable books are often read with more enthusiasm than understanding. There result self-made, self-appointed authorities on the art of arts. It is easy enough because we all tend to forget St Bernard's warning that, in the matter of spiritual direction, whoever guides himself has a fool for a disciple.

There are no easy answers to these problems. But two recent books between them contain most of the answers. They are *The Spiritual Director* by Fr Gabriel, o.d.c., and *Direction Spirituelle et Psychologie* (Etudes Carmélitaines).<sup>1</sup> Fr Gabriel refuses to consider the need for spiritual direction as a speculative question. It is a practical need not adequately met. He reminds us that Leo XIII declared it to be 'a common law of Providence that souls should be led to the loftier spiritual heights through being helped by other men'. These words apply formally to spiritual guidance. Certainly, direction is only another aspect of that 'human instrumentality' which forms the basis of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. St John of the Cross warns us that 'The soul which remains alone, without a master, is like the burning coal which is alone. It will grow colder.' Every priest knows that there are thousands who yearn for holiness, and for the fullness of holiness. If God, therefore, has chosen to work through his ministers, competent directors must be found. Kindness and a pious word for every penitent will not suffice.

The case is no different for the youth of today. Those who have most contact with them bear witness to their generosity. They bear witness that the youth complain, and complain bitterly, of the difficulty in finding directors. So few priests seem to have time, especially in city parishes, or sufficient knowledge of the worker's life to give practical direction. Yet many of these youths have great responsibilities. Many have taken on responsibilities in the cause of Catholic Action, and can justifiably look for guidance in their own spiritual lives. Many seek a fuller and wider apostolate. They seek to live Christ, to give themselves to others, and so give themselves to God. And all this in an urbanised society, with its family and working conditions which militate against purity of mind and body, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Director*, by Fr Gabriel, o.c.d. (Mercier Press; 8s. 6d.), and *Direction Spirituelle et Psychologie*, Etudes Carmélitaines (Desclée de Brouwer).

threaten to stifle every desire for the life of the spirit. Fortunately, such desires do not die easily in the hearts of the young, but they call for a large and grand direction. Prudence was never the hallmark of youth, in any generation. Many sad and sudden falls from grace could be prevented by a strong direction. If the youthful apostolate is not to rest on insecure foundations; if their charity is not to degenerate into philanthropy, some director has to keep before their eyes the splendour of their vision, and before their minds the great dogmatic truths which give value to their young lives. The suggestion that direction is un-English, and foreign to our youth, can only be made by those who forget the days when England produced some of the greatest directors. They also under-estimate the influence, in our own times, of men like Dom Chapman, O.S.B., Fr Steuart, S.J., Fr McNabb, O.P., and their immediate recognition and appreciation by the laity, young and old.

The direction of religious, men or women, leading a secluded life, is a very different matter. It may be that they have many helps denied the laity. In many cases their life may be so arranged that people of simple natures may feel no great need for further direction. But there are souls, in any community, with an analytical cast of thought who are always seeking solutions to 'problems'. A word from the priest as a theologian can be a great help to such. There are scrupulous souls to whom the priest alone can speak with the necessary authority. There are eager souls always tending to extremes, which the priest easily recognises. There are chosen souls who need the reassurance of a priest when God sends his painful and purifying trials. It may be that older members of a community stand in less need of direction than the young. But there are times of exceptional temptation; of community difficulties; or difficulties arising from a new charge. At such times older members of a community, after long years without need for regular direction, now feel the need strongly and urgently. It is true that in the case of nuns the maternal influence of their Prioress is immense. Her daily observation of their external practice of virtue is a wonderful aid to her direction. But that direction is bound to have its limitations. Her very nearness can cause a familiarity which makes firm direction more difficult. She is not a priest and has not the priestly grace. Neither has she always the necessary theological training. If her community is small she may even be seriously lacking in experience of souls. Her direction may have many advantages over that of a priest, but it is never meant to exclude it, but rather to be its complement.

Many of his tasks must make a young priest conscious of his shortcomings. It would be very unfortunate if that were not so, especially in the matter of directing souls. But to be conscious of one's shortcomings is not the same as being unequal to the task. The task here is to make a soul perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. That is a masterpiece which

can only be the work of the divine Artist himself. Here, as so often, the priest is the mere instrument, God the principal cause. God has called. He has answered. God will surely not desert him. Always, he could be a much more perfect instrument. But he is not expected to be perfect. He is only expected to love Christ, to speak of Christ, to convey Christ to his people by the sacraments, prayer, word, and example. He is not expected to be a contemplative because he is ordained. If he is one, so much the better. But it is only expected that he himself values and struggles with the life of prayer. The number of contemplatives among his penitents are likely to be very few, but the number of those who need encouragement, in the more ordinary ways of prayer, will be many. His own efforts in the spiritual life should enable him to encourage others in theirs. True, he is expected to be a reliable guide even in the higher ways of prayer, for he is consulted as a specialist. So he ought to be. His professional studies will not make him an infallible guide, but they should make him a reliable one. Here St John of the Cross has performed his immense service to the Church, in the person of her directors. He has placed them in a position to follow unerringly the progress of grace in souls, and to give them suitable direction in the most difficult periods of their spiritual lives. He has provided all priests with an ordered body of certain knowledge. He has applied theological principles to the psychological elements of the spiritual life, in such a way as to deduce universal laws of direction. This has put spiritual direction, henceforth, on a scientific basis. He enables every priest, though unworthy, to be learned. That is why he is a doctor of the Church. The Mystical Doctor laboured to achieve this because he knew the need for spiritual directors, and because, as he says, 'God is desirous that the government and direction of every man should be undertaken by another man'. For him to see the need was to do something about it. The purpose of this article is merely to underline that need, lest it be more and more overlooked, and less and less be done about it. It is written in the hope that more will seek and more will find. If more directors are not sought, and found, many souls will never find the surest and quickest way to advance in the love of God. There will always be the lonely soul. He walks in a desert land and knows the horror of its loneliness. But God himself searches for the seeking soul, and he will not give up the search until it can be said, 'He found him in a desert place, in a place of horror, and of vast wilderness; he led him about, and taught him. . . . The Lord alone was his leader.' (Deut. 32, 10-12.)

## REVIEWS

**THE WHITE CANONS IN ENGLAND.** By H. M. Colvin. (Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1951; 35s.)

Although they have had to wait a long time the English Premonstratensian, or Norbertine, Canons have now through the industry of Mr Colvin an excellent history of their pre-Reformation activities, and a complete account of their ancient foundations which totalled thirty abbeys ranging from Newhouse in Lincolnshire, begun about 1143, to the last one established at Wendling in Norfolk in 1267.

In a preliminary chapter the author tells of the rise and development of the White Canons (as they came to be called to distinguish them from the Austin or Black Canons) and of their position in the hierarchy of religious orders. Like so many monastic bodies they grew rapidly from a very small group, making their originator a founder of a large order almost despite himself. Certainly St Norbert when he gathered a handful of disciples round him at Prémontré can have had no idea of what would come of his action in so few years. Yet thirty years after he established his first modest little settlements there were more than a hundred houses in existence. The saint had originally planned a small body to help him in preaching and other missionary activities, but when that failed he settled with his followers at Prémontré to live a canonical but very ascetic life. This was in 1121, but five years later he was made archbishop of Magdeburg and amongst the houses he founded in his German diocese he inculcated his own missionary zeal, whereas the ascetes he had left behind, after some hesitation as to whether they should continue together or break up entirely, decided to carry on at Prémontré as a regular monastic community with an abbot approved by Norbert. The missionary activity favoured by the saint disappeared from the order as a whole, and was confined to Germany. Eventually by the thirteenth century it had died out. But the Premonstratensians never completely severed themselves from the pastoral work for souls, retaining throughout their history down to the present day the possession of parishes dependent on an abbey and served by its members. In the first century of their existence they seem to have employed secular clerics to serve these dependent churches, but after the middle of their second century it became the common custom for the canons themselves to serve as parish priests and dispense entirely with vicars chosen from the secular clergy. That this was the case in England Mr Colvin clearly shows.

The bulk of his work is taken up with descriptions of the thirty abbeys and their possessions and dependencies, supported by excellent chapters on the organisation of the order in England, which in the late fifteenth

century still possessed close upon five hundred canons. At the time of the dissolution the last abbot of Barlings was William Mackerell, bishop of Chalcedon and auxiliary of Lincoln. He died on the scaffold in 1537, a victim of Tudor tyranny, for his complicity in the Pilgrimage of Grace. Probably like other sufferers he was offered his life if he repudiated papal supremacy. The author makes no point of this, but the reader's attention may be called to a valuable article in *Dominican Studies*, January 1949, where Father Anstruther, O.P., goes very carefully and fully into the question, and shows that at least one condemned Pilgrim, namely Dr John Pickering, priest of Lythe, received a royal pardon and was released for accepting the royal supremacy, whereas his fellows, including another John Pickering, a Dominican, all suffered the extreme penalty at Tyburn. What happened in London might well have happened to Bishop Mackerell in the north.

S.G.

THE REVELATIONS OF MECHTHILD OF MAGDEBURG. Translated by Lucy Menzies. (Longmans; 18s.)

The title of the collected works of Mechthild which were gathered together in the early fourteenth century and which are here translated almost in their entirety from the original MS., is *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*. This is the theme of her revelations which might almost be given the same title as Mother Julian's since the flowing light is the love of God and this appears in the constant dialogues throughout the book; she writes of 'his touch of love and flow of desire'. These two hundred and sixty detached, though not disconnected, 'revelations' of varying length, are of special significance because Mechthild lived throughout the thirteenth century, dying in 1297 just before the great wave of the fourteenth-century mysticism began. They represent a vivid liturgical and poetic mysticism closer in style to the writings of St Gertrude and St Hildegarde and leading on to the great poets, in many ways reminding the reader of Dante as Miss Menzies points out. There is much here in the personification of the virtues to suggest the dramatisation of Langland, and the exuberance of Margery Kempe is not lacking. The Mass, the annual procession of saints through the liturgical year, the deep appreciation of the Blessed Sacrament, the horrifying picture of the devil, are all here to show us what the thirteenth century could do for a true mystic. Miss Menzies' occasional notes link these revelations here and there with the Pseudo-Denis and Eckhart; but this would seem to be a strained relationship. Mechthild is not really at home in the 'other-worldly' atmosphere of the neo-platonic spirituality. 'Contemplation' suggests to her that she may be aspiring to be an angel, but she reacts firmly in favour of remaining a human being: 'I take Him in my hand, eat Him and drink Him and do with Him what

I will—that can never happen to the angels however high they may be above me; and His Godhead is never so unattainable to me that I am not ceaselessly aware of Him in all my being'. Mechthild in her poetic manner certainly attains the heights: 'On this my soul was so swiftly in God that it soared up without effort and found itself in the Holy Trinity as a child finds itself under its mother's cloak and lays its head on her breast'. Some of the conversations between the three Persons of the Trinity are scarcely theological, but she is always saved from any active error by having her feet planted in the liturgy and the sacraments. For this reason the book makes an extremely interesting study in liturgical spirituality and Miss Menzies is to be congratulated on making it available and so easily readable to the English public.

JOHN CORSON

**THE HOPE OF GLORY:** The Atonement in Our Time. By Martin Jarrett-Kerr, c.r. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

Catholic theologians of recent years have been concerned mainly with two treatises: on the Church, and on the Eucharist. It is on these two subjects that most of the great books have been written by Mersch, Karl Adam, de Lubac, de la Taille, Masure, Bouyer, and by the Anglicans Thornton and Dix. With regard to the Church, the reason for this is not far to seek: the fact being that up to the present we possessed nothing on the Church comparable, for instance, to the classic treatise on the Redemption. And as for the Eucharist, it must be admitted that we have, since the Reformation, been fighting in theology a rearguard action preoccupied, in the first place, with proving the doctrine of the real presence, and secondly, with emphasising the sacrificial aspect of the Mass in a way sometimes which almost suggested a fresh immolation of Christ on the altar. It was important therefore that theologians should direct their attention to a new and more scholarly approach to these questions.

In doing so however it is important that what may be termed the wider implications of the doctrine of the Redemption do not suffer neglect. Rivière was concerned to maintain the balance by his monumental study of *Le Dogme de la Rédemption*, and the author of the present work has also wished to fill a gap of the shelf devoted to shorter (by which we do not mean popular) books on the Atonement. He has particularly borne in mind the objections put forward by modern thinkers of the so-called 'existentialist' school and by the psychologists, maintaining that these two contemporary ways of thought need to be taken as seriously by theologians in this country as they have on the continent 'where a clear Catholic theology meets a scientifically precise knowledge'.

Since his intention is to discuss the Atonement 'apologetically' he starts from a consideration of man's condition as a result of the Fall, and rises

thence to the God who redeems, to the act of redeeming, and to its result. Finally he shows how the new life through the Cross and Resurrection is given to the Church in the sacraments.

Although, of course, this is too short a book (160 pages) to be a wholly adequate treatment of its all-important theme, yet it may fairly be said that the Vice-Principal of Mirfield has done an interesting and indeed a valuable work in writing it.

DESMOND SCHLEGEL

LIFE IS COMMITMENT. By J. H. Oldham. (S.C.M. Press; 12s. 6d.)

Dr Oldham welcomed the invitation to deliver these six lectures on 'The Meaning of Christianity Today' as a 'challenge to set down in black and white what I really believe'. The result is a very sincere statement, but one in which the opinions of his many friends of different denominations fill the foreground of the canvas, while the New Testament provides hardly more than the starting point of the discussions, and the Fathers and Catholic theologians are scarcely mentioned.

The author's principal purpose is to teach that one can only live fully in the measure that one commits oneself. Refusing to choose means drifting. Man, who is not only an individual but a social being, must definitely choose God and Christ. But when the author turns to the 'Church', by which he means the aggregate of Christians of all persuasions, he hesitates. Although the reasons for joining this aggregate 'possess undeniable cogency', he thinks that the actually existing 'Church' is the source of all his doubts and difficulties, especially for her exclusive and unreceptive attitude to the life and experience of those outside. Hence, he cannot urge all to join the 'Church'.

For the author none of the present forms of christianity is the same thing as the *ecclesia* of the New Testament, which is a 'fellowship of persons . . . that is a brotherhood, . . . and *nothing else*'. Yet this surely betrays a radical misunderstanding, as the Church of the New Testament is a visible body, organically compacted, possessing sacraments and a definite doctrine authoritatively taught. And from the day of Pentecost itself entry into the Church by baptism has been taught as necessary for all.

Perhaps the book's most interesting challenge to Catholics is not doctrinal, but practical—'Can a financier or a machine-tender really pray at his work today? Is he making something for Christ's sake?' If not, the Christian should 'give up his christianity or his activity in relation to money or the machine'. There is nothing new in all this; but the need for an integrated christian life, of which every element is redeemed, cannot be too often emphasised.

HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI. (Burns Oates; *The Orchard Books*; 12s. 6d.)

The *Fioretti* (not altogether happily, but now inescapably, rendered 'the Little Flowers'), best known of Franciscan texts, is an Italian translation of most of a Latin book of 'Deeds of St Francis and his companions'. Both original and translation date from the fourteenth century and enshrine, in Fr Cuthbert's words, 'oral traditions of the first or second generation': stories of St Francis treasured in the Marches of Ancona, where the influence of those most devoted to the early days and ways was strong. At its best—and it often is at its best—the book gives an irresistible feeling that here St Francis is brought as close as words can bring him. There must be few readers of it who have not yielded to its charm.

It is difficult to remember that so familiar a book was not translated into English until about a hundred years ago. The translation, by three ladies, was of uneven merit, and was revised, as to text and rendering, by Dom Roger Hudleston for the old series of *Orchard Books*. It is now reprinted in the publishers' new series under the same name, with a new preface by Fr Paulinus Lavery, O.F.M. The new binding, paper and print are all better than the old, and the volume is pleasant to read from. But there was something to be said for the old pocket size, which has gone. Gone, too, has the old price, and this it is idle to lament, for as things are, the present price is very reasonable.

A.E.H.S.

HUMANISME SCIENTIFIQUE ET RAISON CHRETIENNE. By D. Dubarle.  
(Desclée de Brouwer, Paris; n.p.)

This collection of essays and addresses by a priest well informed in the scientific outlook does not pretend to go at length or very deeply into the problems of modern science or of mankind generally. Delicate allusion and cautious suggestion rather than dogmatic statement are the method pursued whether in remarking on the victories or on the limitations of science. Where the argument seeks to show that humanity requires more than scientific progress alone can give it, the most original part indicates the liability of science to be as sinful as so many other features of human life. The book should help both professionals and amateurs of science to order their thoughts in a Christian way.

I.T.

## NOTICES

FR TIMOTHY HARRIS belongs to the Maynooth Mission to China; and every Catholic knows that to be a trade mark of excellence. So no further advertisement is required for his *Christ, Our Life, Our Love* (Clonmore and Reynolds; 10s. 6d.) which follows the plan of Abbot Marmion's *Christ in His Mysteries*, considering the great events of the liturgical year that the reader may thereby enter more fully into the life of Christ. The author lacks something of the biblical inspiration of the Benedictine; yet the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, are plentifully represented and elaborated here and there by authorities like Aquinas or Bonaventure. The treatment of Corpus Christi is, however, disappointingly meagre.

LIFE BEGINS WITH LOVE (Clonmore and Reynolds; 8s. 6d.) does not signify for Dr E. Boyd Barrett the Word breathing forth love and thus giving life to the world. For him the phrase is the explanation of the reality of ordinary day-to-day life with its give-and-take among men. The book is built up from the recollection of the innumerable acts of kindness he has received or witnessed through a long life open to the charity of others. Once the reader has overcome the disappointment at not finding the full treatment of divine love he will find much useful illustration here of human devotedness, mercy, pity, kindness—the external fruits and signs of the form of all the virtues. But there is not lacking the suspicion of fanaticism; for fanaticism takes certain manifestations of goodness and virtue and identifies them with goodness itself, ignoring the hidden spring whence the verdure derives its life.

CHRISTIAN VIRGINITY (Pio Decimo Press, St Louis, Mo.; \$1.00) is a handsomely produced pamphlet compiled by M. V. McMenamy from the writings of Rembert Sorg, O.S.B., and James Kleist, S.J., and forming a commentary on the beautiful Roman Preface for the Consecration of Virgins, the text of which is given in English as an appendix. It is a brief and pithy outline of the Christian teaching and relates virginity to marriage in itself and as a sacrament of the union between Christ and the virgin.

The third edition of Canon C. Barthes's account of the happenings at Fatima has been competently translated by Sister M. Dominic of Syon Abbey as THREE CHILDREN (Clonmore and Reynolds; 15s.). Together with his previous work *Our Lady of Light*, the publishers claim it as the authentic treatment of Fatima. This may be an exaggeration, but anyone who has first read Fr Martindale's careful sifting of the evidence will find this book a refreshingly simple narrative of the events. We need to bear in mind the relative importance of the evidence, but we also need to have a general view of all that happened at Fatima in 1917 and after. This book makes easy reading so that we can see it as the dramatic story which it really was.

## EXTRACTS

LAST September 175 priests having charge of the direction of French communities of nuns met in conference under the inspiration of Père Plé, O.P., of *La Vie Spirituelle*. At the conclusion of the Congress they outlined certain resolutions or *vœux*, which have subsequently been approved by the Cardinals and Archbishops of France:

(a) We consider that the time is ripe for us to recall to the minds of our confreres and superiors the various priestly functions in respect of nuns. The Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops has already, in March 1948, given this advice to the clergy on the subject of nuns: 'The ministry in respect of religious sisters is to be regarded as a chosen ministry of a particularly delicate nature, which may not be carried out without preparation or consideration, at risk of grave prejudice to souls'.  
 (b) We have been forced to admit that many priests are not prepared for this ministry. In order to remedy this defect we have submitted the following suggestions.

(i) That the seminarists and young religious men should at once be encouraged to evaluate justly the ministry in respect of religious sisters, that they be instructed in the theology and history of religious life and in the canon and pastoral law dealing with nuns.  
 (ii) That this formation should be continued for young priests (who as a rule are not yet entrusted with the care of nuns) at their retreats and clergy meetings.  
 (iii) For the clergy already entrusted with this ministry we suggest that a national congress should be called from time to time, say every three years; that study days—for diocese or province—should be regularly provided for them.  
 (c) The members of this congress beg to repeat the resolutions already expressed in March 1948 by the Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops who recommended in particular:

'(i) In each diocese one or more priests should become specialists both for the spiritual needs of the religious communities of women and for the formation of the parish clergy who are confessors or "extra-ordinaries" for nuns and who are engaged in preaching to them.  
 (ii) A place of importance in clerical journals and books be given to elucidating and assisting this ministry to nuns.  
 (iii) A more active share be taken by the regular clergy who are better acquainted with the practice of religious life as they are often united with women congregations under the same spiritual patronage.'

This congress has shown how happy and fruitful collaboration in this common work can be between the secular clergy and religious of all the spiritual families.

- (d) The members of the congress suggested that a directory for the use of chaplains, confessors and canonical visitors should be drawn up and published under the supervision of the Hierarchy.
- (e) It was also suggested that the canonical visitations should take place regularly as laid down by the Code and that they should be made by specially qualified priests, either secular or regular.
- (f) It seemed very desirable that the initiative already taken by certain dioceses should become general, where they organise regular days of recollection for nuns, days which prove specially useful for the smaller congregations who suffer more than the larger from lack of formation.
- (g) The members of the congress pointed out the serious inconveniences that sometimes arise from the fact that the nuns (especially in parochial schools) have for their ordinary confessor the priest with whom they have to collaborate outside the confessional. If any other arrangement be impossible, it seemed desirable that these sisters should be able to benefit with the greatest possible ease by approaching another priest for confession.
- (h) It appeared timely for priests in charge of sisters, each according to his abilities, to be urged to give the nuns a formation, at once doctrinal, biblical, moral and liturgical, both fundamental and applied, so as to encourage in them a feeling for the Church and her actual needs—on the universal as well as diocesan and parochial levels and to nourish and guide their understanding of the evangelical life, the leaven of religious life.
- (i) It was suggested that the priests, both secular and regular, should have a real desire to awaken religious vocations especially during their retreats and days of recollection given to girls, as well as in the confessional.

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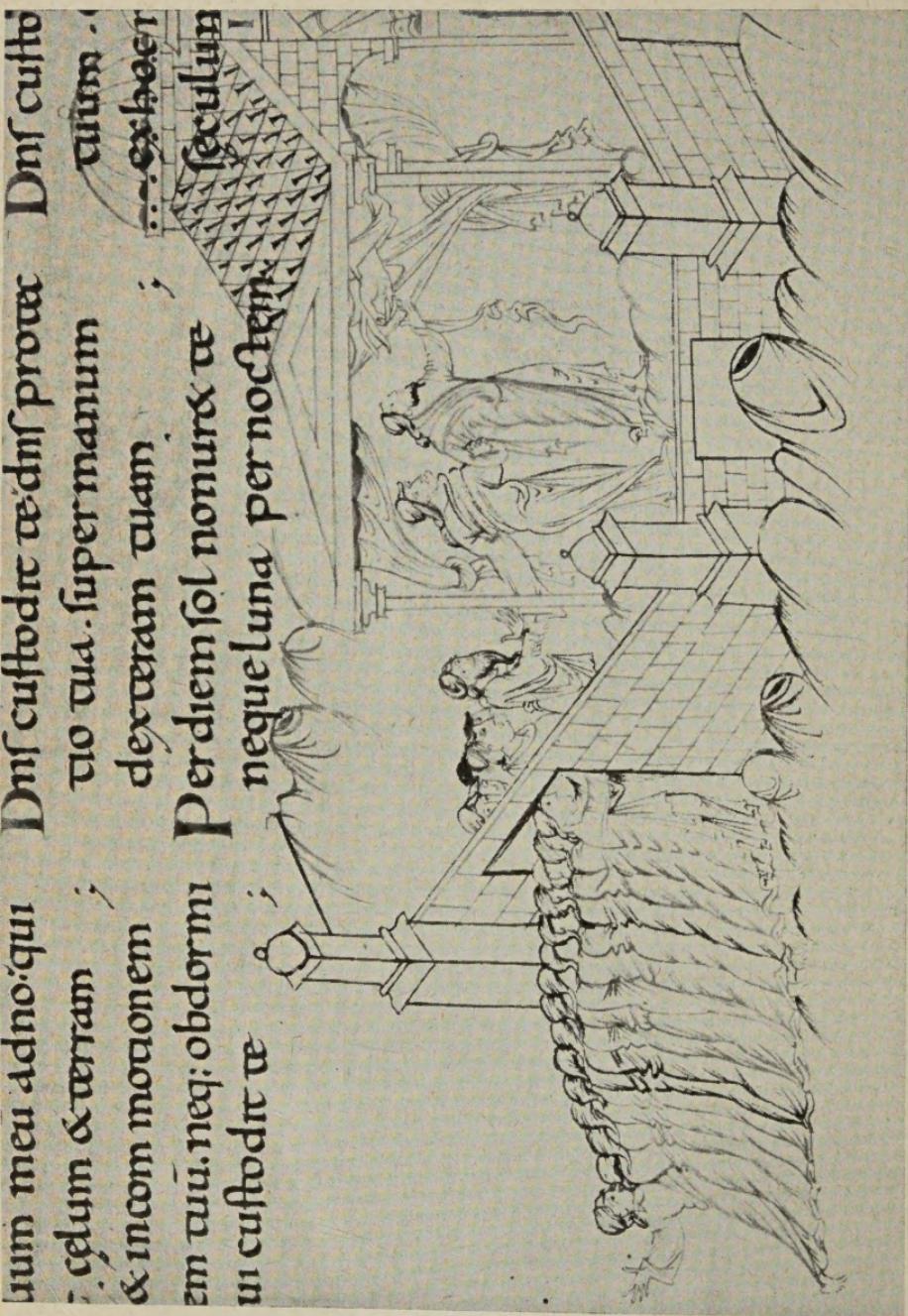
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um meu adno: qui  
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ui custodit &  
Dns custodit te dñs protec  
tio tua. super manum  
dexteram tuam ;  
Per diem sol non urit te  
neque luna per noctem



'I rejoiced at the things that were said to me:  
We shall go into the house of the Lord'—Ps. 121